

Pulp, paper and pioneers contribute to 100-year history

1883—The La Camas Colony Co. buys 2,600 acres of land . . . 1983—Crown Zellerbach spends \$425 million to buy modern equipment

Here's a capsulization of some of the important (and not so important) events in the 100-year history of Camas mill.

1883 — The La Camas Colony Co., under the leadership of Henry Pittcock, bought 2,600 acres of land and began construction of a paper mill to supply newsprint for the *Oregonian* and other newspapers in the region.

Crews began clearing land, building dams and constructing a sawmill. Thirty Chinese laborers began work on the mill ditch, an aqueduct which continues to supply Camas mill with water.

The townsite of La Camas was laid out and platted. La Camas' first store, owned by Aeneas MacMaster, opened for business.

1884 — Henry Pittcock, J.K. Gill and William Lewthwaite formed the Columbia River Paper Co. and filed articles of incorporation in the county clerk's office.

The first post office was established in La Camas.

1885 — The paper mill produced the first wood pulp manufactured in the northwest. It was reported to be of excellent quality.

1886 — A fire the evening of Nov. 6 destroyed the mill. Damages were estimated at \$100,000. Cause of the blaze is unknown.

1888 — The mill was rebuilt to include two paper machines, a groundwood mill, a sulfite mill with two digesters, and a sulfur burner. The plant employed about 65 people.

1889 — Washington became a state.

1894 — The post office officially changed the name of the colony to "Camas," dropping the elegant-sounding "La."

1904 — Number 4 paper machine started up, making newsprint.

A consolidation of Crown Paper Co. resulted in the formation of the Crown-Columbia Paper Co.

1906 — The bag factory was built and equipped with 14 machines.

New digesters were added which increased sulfite production from 10 to 38 tons a day. The mill's steam plant was expanded. Number 5 paper machine started up.

1909 — The current No. 2 paper machine started up.

1910 — The Crown-Columbia Paper Co. spent \$65,000 on new buildings to double the capacity of the mill. That year, the mill produced four million pounds of paper.

1911 — The mill had seven paper machines in operation, employed 450 people and paid out \$25,000 monthly in wages.

Citizens voted by a margin of 129 to 121 to keep pigs

and cows from the streets.

1913 — The mill changed to electric power and by 1917 all but six of the mill's steam engines had been replaced with electric motors.

Number 8 paper machine was installed, and at the time, was the largest in the world, traveling 550 feet per minute and turning out a sheet 186 inches wide. Eighteen new bag machines were installed to turn out one-half million bags daily.

Work was begun on a new woodmill.

1914 — A log haul was in-

stalled with two drag saws and two vertical splitters. Prior to this change, logs were hauled from the river on a wood pole slip by a donkey engine. This early mill was equipped with two vertical steam splitters and with disc barkers. Some barking was also done with spud and axes.

The high school was dedicated and a stage line was initiated between Washougal, Camas and Vancouver.

The Crown-Columbia Co. merged with the Willamette Paper Co. to form the Crown-Willamette Paper Co. Louis Bloch served as vice president and general manager. Later, the company was rated as the second largest manufacturer of paper in the world.

1918 — The Crown-Willamette Hotel opened with 33 rooms. Lunch cost 35 cents.

1919 — A roof was built over Nos. 1, 2, 4 and 5 paper machines. This was accomplished without a single injury or lost minute of production.

1920 — The first drum barker was installed at the woodmill and the first Jensen towers were built in the sulfite mill.

1921 — A sleet storm closed parts of the mill for a period lasting eight days. The bag factory and Nos. 2 and 5 paper machines continued running with power supplied by the steam plant.

1922 — The mill used a horn attached to a radio to broadcast news events to the citizens of Camas.

1924 — The first sulfite bleach plant was installed.

1925 — A new dock was built.

1926 — The kraft mill started into operation and the bag factory moved into a new building.

1927 — Construction started on a flume to carry wood from the sawmill to the grinder rooms.

1928 — The Crown-Willamette Paper Co. merged with the Zellerbach Corp., and evolved into a pulp and paper empire under the name of Crown Zellerbach. Louis Bloch served as chairman of the board, with J.O. Zellerbach as president.

1929 — The wooden floor between Nos. 4 and 5 paper machines was replaced by concrete. This was accomplished without a production loss.

1930 — Newsprint manufacturing at Camas stopped as the mill became a specialty papers operation.

The converting plant started up and began producing "Zee" and "Zalo" brands of bathroom tissue. Zee was touted as a soft, ivory-tinted tissue and sold for 10 cents a roll. Zalo was a fully bleached sheet and sold in stores for 15 cents a roll, or two for a quarter.

In March, a bag factory

employee set a record of attaching 3,000 handles to shopping bags during an eight hour shift.

1933 — The mill began a four-year Paper School, complete with textbook and seminars. The school was discontinued in the late '70s.

1940 — On Dec. 11, the city of Camas, through Mayor H.J. Woodworth, presented Louis Bloch with a plaque granting him honorary citizenship in the City of Camas "in appreciation of the innumerable contributions which he and his company have made in the development and progress of our community."

1941 — With the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Camas mill changed its whole perspective and purpose. The machine shops were transformed into shipyards, making rudders at the rate of four per week for navy tankers, aircraft carriers and Liberty and Victory ships. While 400 mill employees went off to fight the war, Crown Zellerbach sent re-

cruiters into the southern states and onto the western farms to hire workers for the Camas mill. To fill those 400 jobs, 25,000 people were hired during the war.

1946-48 — New bleaching equipment for high grade kraft specialty papers was added at this time. The mill's capacity increased to 750 tons per day, adding 150 new jobs. Five digesters and two paper machines (14 and 15) were installed and a new woodmill started up with state of the art equipment.

In 1948, the worst Columbia River flood in 54 years occurred. Number 15 paper machine was the only machine that remained in operation during the flood; workers reached it by boat or over roof tops.

Also in '48, two Camas mill employees, Lexie Smith and Charles McKeever, each received 50-year service awards from Louis Bloch, chairman of the board. Smith's starting pay was 75 cents a day for 12 hours. McKeever's was \$1 a day for a

10-hour shift.

1949 — The Portland Fire Department ran short of red roses to decorate its engines for the Rose Festival Parade and asked the Camas Fire Department to help. Eighteen boxes of Paul Scarlett roses were cut on mill grounds to "rescue" the firefighters.

At this time, it was noted that Camas mill daily production had increased 47 percent in 10 years, to 547 tons per day.

Camas mill was presented the Merit Award for safety by Washington Governor Arthur B. Langlie.

1950 — Recordbreaking cold and storm resulted in a 1,092 ton loss of production due to power interruptions, waterline breaks and equipment freezing up.

This item appeared in the company newsletter: "Something new in safety programs took place in Camas when the women employees took over the hour. In a panel discussion, six women, representing all departments in the mill in which women are employed, gave their opinions on what is good and bad about the mill's safety program. Remarks of commendation following this interest indicated that interest in it was particularly high."

New "Facial Fold" napkins were first produced at Camas. The two-ply facial quality dinner napkins were designed for restaurant use.

1953 — Camas mill celebrated 70 years of operation by opening its doors to greet 11,559 visitors during three days in May.

A dial telephone system was installed, linking together for the first time, 96 departments.

1955 — Camas received the Ten Year Safety Award at the tenth annual Labor-Management Safety Conference in Seattle. The award was for the lowest cumulative accident frequency rate for the ten year period ending Dec. 31, 1955.

1955-57 — Major expansion included: a 300 ton capacity kraft bleach plant; a digester; a 350 ton daily capacity recovery boiler; a new lime kiln and eight stationary digesters.

The Central Research Division was formed, as was the



During the flood of 1948, it was business as usual for the storeroom.



Casey O'Dell (right) makes ship parts during WWII.



Gardener Ray Young tended the roses in 1961.



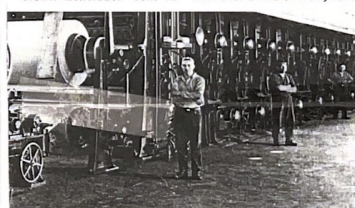
In 1925, No. 9 paper machine was run by hand.



C. S. West, an early superintendent of Camas.



Celebrating in 1959: Bill Anderson, Hoover F.



Blake, Bill Linden, Dyke Wenkt and Tony Kianther.



il, around 1894. The mill flume, pictured around 1900.



Jack Robertson, Police Chief Wright and Max McGill.

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